

# BATH RAILWAY SOCIETY

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## JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2019

Dear Member,

A Happy New Year to you all and I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas?

Our last meeting of 2018 was all about Mendip Stone and the Class 59's given by John Barlow and Robin Jacob. They first took us through the very beginnings of the Foster Yeoman 'family' and in the second half how the Class 59's came about and their use. Following on from this talk John & Robin have invited the Society to visit both Merehead and Whatley quarries and the committee will now be looking at arranging this one summer evening during 2019. Full details on this will be announced in due course. We must also thank Davina for the 'festive' refreshments at the December meeting.

The first meeting of 2019 will be on Thursday January 3 and as previously announced we will be getting into holiday mode early when our guest speaker, Mike Fenton, will be telling us all about 'GWR Camping Coach Holidays'. This is a subject that is slightly different, so blow the Christmas cobwebs away and look forward to summer at St Marys Church Hall. Doors open as usual at 7pm.

Our website has now been in being for quite a number of years and unfortunately the software used is now 'life expired'. As a consequence of this it is highly probable that no repairs or updates can be made if problems do occur, and it may have to be taken down. The website was built, and maintained since its inception by John Dainton and he is also now standing down from this work, and we thank him for all he has done for us. We hope to still be able to post the Newsletter for the time being unless any serious problems happen. The committee is now looking at overhauling the software and website. Our email address will not be affected should there be problems with the website.

On January 5 (10am - 5pm) and 6, (10am to 4.30pm), the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust's Annual Model Railway Display will be taking place at Edington Village Hall, Lippetts Way, Edington, NR Bridgwater, Somerset Entrance prices (Adult £5 - Con £4.50p) are held as last year, with free entry for accompanied children under 16. On the same weekend, the Wessex Association of Model Railway Clubs hold their Frome 2019 Winter Exhibition at the Cheese & Grain, Market Yard, Frome with at least 13 layouts and four trade stands in attendance.

The Office of Rail & Road has produced statistics of estimated station usage (passengers) in the 2017/18 period and the following stations in the South West came out top: - Bristol Temple Meads - 11,350,146, Bath Spa 6,395,694, Swindon 3,625,360, and Exeter Central 2,607,502. Other stations in the area were Bristol Parkway 2,324,808 while Pilning recorded just 478 passengers. Further down in the South West, Gunnislake station recoded 56,118 passengers while Coombe Jnc on the Looe branch saw 156 users. London Waterloo again came out top overall with a staggering 94,355,000 users!

The London Transport Museum has launched an appeal to raise £200,000 to return a 'Q' stock underground train to running condition. The Museum is aiming to get three of the five surviving cars into service by 2021, this being the 50th anniversary since the last 'Q' stock train ran in passenger service. Further information can be found at [www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk) where donations can also be made.

An application to the planning inspectorate should be made this summer for a 6.5km rail link which would enable direct travel from the West Country to Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead and Slough into Heathrow Airport without having to change trains at London Paddington.

PS Ryde, the last paddle steamer to carry passengers across the Solent is to be restored following a successful fundraising campaign. It entered service for the Southern Railway in 1937 sailing between Portsmouth and Ryde until 1969. It saw service as HMS Ryde, having been requisitioned by the Royal Navy during World War II. Since coming out of service it has been used as a night club and hotel, but after a fire it is now in a very poor state of repair and decaying on the Isle of Wight. Work is due to commence moving it during the summer of 2019 before restoration works commence.

Fifty years ago, this month on January 6, 1969 one of the most bitterly-opposed railway closures took place when the Waverley Route linking Carlisle with Edinburgh saw its last trains. This was a 98-mile main line and it was considered by many to be the worst of all the Beeching cuts. The last passenger trains to run over the route were a special, organised by the RCTS hauled by Deltic D9007 Pinza, with the final passenger working being a sleeper train which departed Edinburgh Waverley for London's St Pancras at 9:56pm with Class 45 - D60 Lytham St Anne's at its head. This arrived two hours late into Carlisle due to anti-closure protesters blocking the line at Hawick and Newcastleton. Just a few hours after that last train ran, British Rail symbolically lifted a section of track at Riddings Junction in the presence of reporters and photographers to show that the closure was final! In September 2015 the line, now known as 'The Borders Railway' was very successfully re-opened the 31 miles from Edinburgh to Tweedmouth and now campaigners are pressing to get the line extended onto Hawick and eventually back south to Carlisle thus restoring the whole of the Waverley Route.

Also closed 50 years ago this month was the then 'freight only' southern end of the Somerset & Dorset from Broadstone Junction to Blandford Forum which was officially closed from 6th January 1969. Freight traffic to Blandford had dwindled to an 'as required' basis as had the need to serve the Bailey Gate Creamery en-route. The last 'official' freight train to run up to Blandford Forum ran on January 2 1969 hauled by Class 33 - D6513 (this became 33102 - now preserved). A further unidentified member of the class did venture up the line on the actual day of closure to collect some remaining wagons from the yard at Blandford Forum. Track lifting then commenced north of Blandford Forum and this was completed back to Broadstone Junction by October 1970.

Another closure 50 years ago was part of the line into Gosport from Fareham. Passenger services had already been withdrawn over it from June 8, 1953, but Gosport remained open for freight traffic. The last train into Gosport ran on Friday January 3 before official closure took place from Monday January 6. Track was lifted from Gosport back to Holbrook, where the line from Fareham continued to serve extensive Royal Navy establishments at Priddy's Hard, Frater and Bedenham which had their own internal rail system and locomotives. After taking up the track at Gosport it was found that a four wheel 'Southern' utility van had been left 'marooned' in the station! Trains continued to run once-a-week on the remaining section of line from Fareham, usually hauled by a Class 33, 47 or 73, but from 1989 they ran 'as required' before ceasing later that year. The official closure of the then disused and overgrown line is recorded as 1991, and one of the last recorded workings was of Class 20's top 'n' tailed on a weed killing train down to Holbrook in an attempt to stop the spreading vegetation!

Engineering works will be taking place on the GWR Network this month. On Saturday and Sunday January 5 & 6, buses replace trains between Crediton and Barnstaple while on Sunday 6, there will be no services between Swindon & Didcot and Warminster & Romsey again with bus replacement services. Also no GWR services will be operating through to Brighton. The following weekend will again see bus replacement on the Barnstaple line while on the Sunday no services will operate from Bradford on Avon/Chippenham through Westbury to Frome/Warminster with bus replacement being provided. Again Brighton services will not run. You are strongly advised to check train times if you intend travelling during weekends this month.

14xx class 0-4-2 tank engine No 1466 has left the GWS Centre at Didcot for contract overhaul at Western Steam Engineering at Lydney on the Dean Forest Railway. The aim is to complete it in time for the GWS's 60th anniversary in 2021 with the cost estimated at around £300,000. £190,000 is currently in the fund, and the shortfall of £110,000 has to be raised over the duration of the overhaul.

The 'downside' entrance at Weston Super Mare station is to be re-opened for public use. It has been closed since 2015 due to vandalism and unsociable behaviour.

Kidderminster station (main line) is getting a makeover. Work starts this month on enhancing the forecourt area, and later in the year improvements will be made to the station's buildings.

The North Somerset Railway (Frome-Radstock) has acquired a DMU trailer car from a Class 117 unit. TCL 59492 is in un-restored condition and is currently stored at Eastleigh's Arlington Fleet Services.

We look forward to seeing you back on January 3 at St Marys Church Hall, but if you are unable to attend, our next meeting will then be on February 7 when Anna Holbrook will bring us up to date on the proposed 'Western Rail Link to Heathrow Airport'.

Please note:- All events and special trains etc are mentioned in good faith and hopefully details are correct at the time of publication of the Newsletter. Please however, do check before travelling or attending events as things can change